

Notice of Funding Opportunity #SFOP0009761

Women in Agriculture Gain Economic Security (WAGES)

Questions for the Public

Program Design:

Q: Could you please clarify if you have a specific definition of "women-led cooperatives"? Do you mean cooperatives that are comprised of 100% female members, at least 50% female members, or that have female leadership, such as a female President?

A: Women led cooperatives should be comprised of minimum 80% female members in leadership positions.

Q: Are applicants required to select Cooperatives composed of 100% of women, led by women (majority of the board), or Cooperatives composed by at least 60% of women (members)?

A: Cooperative members can be composed by at least 60% women.

Q: Can the subgrant to the cooperatives include some working capital costs (less than 20% of the whole amount)?

A: No working capital costs are allowed for the subgrants.

Q: Are applicants required to keep the program's name as "WAGES: : Women in Agriculture Gain Economic Security " or can they suggest their own brand name?

A: The applicants are not required to keep the program's name and may suggest a new name in their proposal. However, the name will need to be cleared by the Department of State team.

Q: Would NEA/AC accept collaboration with GDA (Groupement de développement Agricole et de pêche) and SMSA (Sociétés mutuelles des services agricoles) as women-led cooperatives for the WAGES project?

A: Yes. Tunisian GDAs and SMSAs are the main target beneficiaries of this project.

Q: According to the NOFO, the project beneficiaries must include "at least 15 established women agricultural cooperatives with a total of at least 150 rural women members." Is this a mandatory requirement or could the project beneficiaries include, for example, 3 cooperatives with 50 women in each, totaling 150 members as specified?

A: As stated in the NOFO, there must be at least 15 established cooperatives that will benefit from this project.

Q: Is it mandatory to include at least 3 Tunisian start-ups as project beneficiaries or can this number be reduced to 1 or maximum 2 start-ups?

A: As stated in the NOFO, there must be between 3 to 5 Tunisian startups as project beneficiaries.

Q: Does the “access to finance” element in objective 2 entail assistance to help the involved cooperatives mobilize resources for their businesses or rather guaranteed provision of additional capital from the financial sector?

A: The access to finance objective requires that assistance is to develop/restructure the cooperatives financial process, provide resources on access to finance (building structure/capacity), establish a collaboration with financial institutions, and connect with investors.

Q: Are there particular geographical areas or governorates in Tunisia NEA would prioritize? How should applicants determine which governorates are underserved?

A: It is up to the selected grantee to identify the relevant regions based on the requested assessment under Objective 1. The first objective indicates that the project will first review existing studies on Tunisian cooperatives. A follow-on assessment should be conducted to identify the targeted regions and the cooperatives that will benefit from this project, highlight their respective needs, and tailor the support activities accordingly. Regions and beneficiaries selected must be approved by the Department of State team.

Q: Could you please clarify if the bullet points listed under Objectives 1 and 2 on page 17 of the NOFO pertain to work that should be completed under the Option Years specifically, or is it work expected to be undertaken during the initial 3 years?

A: The objectives for option years remain the same as the initial 3 years but build on the work achieved, expand in additional agricultural sectors, and increase beneficiaries.

Q: The NOFO mentions a lot of needs and potential areas for technical assistance. Can applicants select some topics from the list without covering all the areas mentioned in the NOFO?

A: It is up to the applicants to select whichever topics they can cover given into consideration the objectives and budget of the proposed project.

Q: Per NOFO p. 14, applicants should “demonstrate the ability to engage the Government of Tunisia”. Could you please clarify if applicants are allowed to engage with the Government of Tunisia under this program?

A: Yes, in coordination with the Department of State project team the applicants are allowed to engage with the government to facilitate the implementation of the project.

Q: Could you please clarify if the "small grants of \$5,000 to \$10,000" (page 8 of the NOFO) is the total potential amount for all the startups, or potential amounts for each of the startups?

A: The small grants \$5000-\$10,000 is per start up; applicant must select between 3-5 start-ups.

Q: Could you please clarify if applicants are expected to provide grants to cooperatives for equipment?

A: The applicant is not required to provide grants to cooperatives for equipment, if equipment deemed necessary, the applicant should determine the most appropriate and transparent procurement method for the equipment following federal regulations.

Q: Could you please clarify whether the project could finance small scale construction projects?

A: The project cannot finance any construction work.

Q: Can the equipment and grants to start-ups be provided during the Option Years of the program?

A: The grants for 3-5 innovative start-ups must be awarded in the initial three-year period of the project performance.

Application:

Q: Is there is a specific template to follow to draft the project narrative? If so, where can it be found?

A: Kindly find the Program Narrative Section (pg 7) in the Appendix 3 Application Guidance for information. It is found in the related documents for this NOFO on Grants.gov.

Q: There is a discrepancy in the call on the length of the extension / option year information. Is the page limit 2 or 3 pages?

A: The length of the option years narrative should not exceed 2 pages.

Q: Should the Logic Model, Results Monitoring Plan and Project Timeline cover the Option Years?

A: The Logic Model, Results Monitoring Plan and Project Timeline should only cover the initial three-year period of the project.

Q: Could you please clarify whether the Logic Model, RMP, Project Timeline, Job Descriptions, Sustainability Plan and Security, Risk Mitigation, & Contingency Planning Summary, and Letters of Agreement/Intent each have to be uploaded as separate Word documents?

A: Yes, they should be submitted as separate documents.

Q: Could you please clarify if the Option Years Project Narrative may be up to two or three pages? And could you confirm that it counts toward the 15-page project narrative page limit?

A: The option years narrative must not exceed 2 pages. It does not need to be counted in the 15-page limit.

Q: Can I submit photos with my application?

A: Yes, but the program narrative must not exceed 15 pages.

Do I need to include quotes from suppliers with my application?

A: It is not required to include precise quotes- best estimates are sufficient at the time of the application.

Background:

Q: Is this program a continuation / scaling of existing projects? For example, how does WAGES relate to the ACEA project? Is NEA/AC able to share related reports / evaluations on related projects (or are they available publicly somewhere)?

A: ACEA and WAGES can intersect in certain areas including some of the target beneficiaries, and Objective 2 activities. Applicants can reach out directly during the application phase to ACEA project implementer to request access to public information. During the implementation of the project, the Department of State team will facilitate coordination between ACEA and WAGES project teams to avoid duplication and ensure synergy.

Q: Is NEA/AC able to share a portfolio of existing and relevant projects in Tunisia?

A: During negotiation phase of the project, the Department of State team can provide general information on U.S. Embassy projects in Tunisia.